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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 000819

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: FOUR CIS PKF BRIEFLY DETAINED AFTER TRAFFIC
ACCIDENT

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Georgian media reported on May 18 that an armored vehicle from a CIS peacekeeping convoy hit a private vehicle while traveling to a PKF checkpoint on the Zugdidi side of the conflict zone. Reports claimed that the Russian troops were reinforcements for existing peacekeepers stationed on the Georgian controlled side of the conflict zone, but the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) said the movement was part of a normal troop rotation. Media reports also alleged that the driver of the vehicle and several other peacekeepers were drunk at the time of the incident. UNOMIG confirmed that a CIS BTR 70 hit a private vehicle around 12:30 am May 18, but could not confirm that the driver was drunk. Four peacekeepers were arrested following a tense shouting match between locals and Georgian media and the PKF. According to UNOMIG, the peacekeepers were later released without further incident and the situation is calm. Prime Minister Gurgenzidze publicly called the peacekeepers' actions unacceptable and demanded that Russia coordinate the movement of its peacekeepers with Georgia.

¶2. (C) UNOMIG issued a situation report of the accident on May 18. UNOMIG monitors confirmed that a CIS PKF convoy consisting of three BTR 70 armored vehicles, 10 GAZ 66 trucks, four URAL trucks and one Kamaz truck was traveling to a CIS PKF checkpoint on the Georgian side of the conflict zone when one of the BTRs hit a vehicle. When UNOMIG monitors arrived on the scene, a crowd of locals led by Samgrelo Governor Zaza Gorozia were arguing with the peacekeepers, accusing them of drunkenness (Note: UNOMIG has not yet been able to confirm this claim. End note). Four peacekeepers were arrested and later released following a heated exchange between Gorozia and Deputy Commander of the CIS PKF Vladimir Rogozin. According to UNOMIG, Gorozia accused Rogozin of not informing the Georgian authorities of PKF movement in advance and of having personnel and armored vehicles in excess of official numbers. He told Rogozin that he would not allow any CIS PKF vehicles to enter the area controlled by the Georgian government for the next seven days and instructed Rogozin to inform him personally when future CIS PKF convoys enter the Georgian side of the conflict zone (Note: it is common procedure for the CIS PKF to inform the local authorities in advance of troop rotations. End note). UNOMIG informed us that CIS PKF Chief of Staff Yevgeniy Ochlov later apologized to Georgian Commander of peacekeeping activities Mamuka Kurashvili for not informing the Georgians in advance.
TEFFT